

Chairwoman Yvette D. Clarke (D-NY), prepared statement
Subcommittee on Emerging Threats, Cybersecurity, and Science and Technology
Committee on Homeland Security Hearing

Hearing

*“The Department of Homeland Security’s Science and Technology
Directorate”*

MARCH 3, 2010

Dr. O’Toole, we are pleased to have you here today. The S&T Directorate is a critical element of the Department’s efforts to secure the homeland, and I know many of us are eager to hear about your plans and priorities for S&T.

Spurred by the findings of several reports, this Committee initiated a comprehensive review of the organization and activities of the Science and Technology Directorate. Our purpose was to identify areas within the Directorate that necessitate additional oversight or modifications to legislative authorities. In doing so, we’ve reviewed the Homeland Security Act and the Department’s use of the authorities the Congress has vested in it. We have also received insight and information from DHS leadership, stakeholders, the R&D community, business leaders, and independent analysts.

It is clear that improvements have been made since the Directorate was first stood up – many of us share the opinion of the National Academy of Public Administration, which stated in its comprehensive review of S&T in 2009 that “S&T has made strides towards becoming a mature and productive research and development organization, particularly during the last three years.”

S&T research activities have indeed created products that are used today by DHS, the first responder community, and infrastructure owners and operators to better secure our homeland. These products are as varied as the Department’s mission, and include everything from secure USB devices and chemical detection systems to reports, training modules, and standards. We commend S&T for these activities.

I think we’d all agree, however, that despite positive steps forward, much work remains. NAPA concluded in their 2009 report that S&T’s ability to fulfill its mission is “limited by the lack of a cohesive strategy, the insularity that defines its culture, and the lack of mechanisms necessary to assess its performance in a systematic way.” This is deeply concerning, and squares with the Committee’s own review.

Our analysis suggests that DHS does not have a clear risk-based methodology to determine what projects to fund, how much to fund, and how to evaluate a project’s effectiveness or usefulness. We found that in spite of investing in hundreds of research projects, most technologies are never transitioned into acquisition programs. This makes it difficult to evaluate the Directorate’s success in mitigating security vulnerabilities. Without metrics, it becomes difficult for Congress to justify increases in programmatic funding.

That’s why I believe this is a crucial time for S&T. S&T will never achieve success unless research rules and metrics are more fully established. Under Secretary O’Toole, this is your responsibility, and we will judge you based on your achievements in these areas. We look forward to hearing about your efforts to address these issues.